

Designated Safeguarding Leads and the role of the Assistant team manager within the Social Workers in Schools (SWiS) Team

Bolton Council initially developed this intervention in 2019, funded by [What Works for Children's Social Care](#) (WWCSC). Findings from the pilot were encouraging but did not clear the threshold of statistical significance. This has led to the DfE funding several further trials which involves approximately 40 Local Authorities nationally.

Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL's) are members of staff who have responsibility for safeguarding children and young people in schools. This includes children subject to **Child Protection** and **Child in Need** plans as well as children supported by non-statutory services such as Team around Families and Early Help.

What Works for Children's Social Care (WWCSC) is funding a second pilot in Gateshead (for research purposes) to understand the impact of offering supervision to Designated safeguarding leads in schools (DSL's).

WWCSC are aiming to measure the impact this can have on their own wellbeing, but also the appropriateness of referrals made by DSLs to Children's Services. This is currently funded for 1 academic year up to July 2022.

I am working alongside **35 primary schools** and **6 secondary schools**, known as the "**treatment group**". These schools were selected randomly by WWCSC. The other remaining schools in the borough are known as the "**control group**".

Gateshead is also 1 of 9 Local Authorities that are part of the **Child Sexual Abuse trial** within the overall DSL offer. The aim of this trial is to understand if all the DSL's in the treatment group and I (as the Supervising Social Worker) attend training led by the *Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse*, does this increase our awareness and indicators of sexual abuse through our increased knowledge and therefore help identify children at risk earlier. The research will also look at the increase of referrals for this issue.

[Working together to safeguard children 2018](#) highlights that effective supervision can play a significant role in ensuring a clear focus on a child's welfare. Furthermore, it explains that DSLs should receive supervision to help inform their practice and to be given the opportunity to critically reflect on their decisions and the impact these have on a child and their family.

[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) recommends that DSL's should be given appropriate training and support to be able to offer advice and support to other staff about child welfare and child protection matters.

In June 2021 Ofsted published a [review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges](#), it was highlighted that sexual abuse and peer to peer sexual abuse is more prevalent than previously thought.

It is however, widely recognised that the DSL's receive very limited, if any, formal supervision regarding the young people they hold responsibility for. In addition to this the DSL's do not always have a sound working knowledge of the Local Authority thresholds which can be vital in supporting their complex decision making.

The role of the Assistant team manager (SWiS) is to reduce this gap:

Primary Schools

- ATM will offer the DSL's in primary schools 4-6 weekly reflective supervision, in a 1-1 format.
- This will give the DSL's the opportunity to bring their own case discussion which will include their own worries and anxieties, concerns and dilemmas.
- **This supervision will only be in respect of children who are not currently open to children's social care.**

Secondary Schools

- The offer to secondary schools is also 4-6 weekly but in a group supervision format.
- This is because there will be more than one DSL in a secondary school.
- The format (similar to the primary school model) will include a case discussion and associated dilemmas however, the group supervision model will encourage the DSL's to become more curious in their thinking and decision making and to consider multiple perspectives as a result of the discussions rather than outright answers and conclusions.
- **Again, it is important to note that this pilot is solely focussed on children who not subject to statutory children's service support.**

The relationship that is built through these supervision sessions will be vital. The relationship developed between the ATM and DSL should give DSL the opportunity to make direct contact with the assistant team manager to discuss any real time issues or safeguarding concerns, thus giving an 'ad-hoc supervision' and direct support in terms of referrals to improve the outcome for that child and family.

The following PRIMARY schools have been selected to receive supervision:

Barley Mow Primary School	Bede Community Primary School	Bill Quay Primary School	Brighton Avenue Primary School	Caedmon Community Primary School
Carr Hill Community Primary School	Chopwell Primary School	Clover Hill Community Primary School	Colegate Community Primary School	Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School
Falla Park Community Primary School	Fellside Community Primary School	Gateshead Jewish Primary School	Glynwood Community Primary School	Greenside Primary School
High Spen Primary School	Kells Lane Primary School	Kelvin Grove Community Primary School	Keser Girls School	Kibblesworth Academy
Parkhead Community Primary School	Portobello Primary School	Ravensworth Terrace Primary School	Roman Road Primary School	Rowlands Gill Community Primary School
St Agnes' Catholic Primary School	St Alban's Catholic Primary School	St Anne's Catholic Primary School	St Joseph's Catholic Infant School, Birtley	St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School	Swalwell Primary School	The Drive Community Primary School	White Mere Community Primary School	Windy Nook Primary School

The following **SECONDARY** schools have been selected to receive supervision:

Ateres Girls
High School

Emmanuel
College

Heworth
Grange School

Kingsmeadow
Community
School

St Thomas
More Catholic
School

Thorp Academy

The **National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR)**

- NIESR will analyse data from the trial and will use it to make findings on:
 1. The appropriateness of referrals made by DSL's to Children's Services
 2. Subjective wellbeing of the DSL

- NIESR will also be looking at the theme of ***child sexual abuse*** and how frequently DSL's identify it as a concern when making a referral to children's social care.

Alongside the findings that the data produces it is also anticipated that DSL's receiving effective supervision will help decrease DSL's feeling of anxiety and stress and increase confidence in decision making, which will ultimately reduce the number of unnecessary/inappropriate referrals made to Children's Social Care.

Please contact me if you have any queries:

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